

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend claims 1 and 7, and add the following new claims:

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1. (Amended) A starter comprising:

a starting motor for generating rotation force;

a pinion shaft rotatable by the starting motor and supported slidably in an axial direction, the pinion shaft having a recess and a step on an outer periphery thereof;

A5  
a pinion fitted on an end of the pinion shaft opposite the starting motor in a rotation-restricted manner relative to the pinion shaft and movable forward integrally with the pinion shaft, the pinion having a front end surface and a rear end surface, the front end surface being opposite to the rear end surface and the rear end surface being on a motor side; and

a restricting member fitted in the recess in contact with the pinion;

wherein the restricting member is normally in press-contact with the front end surface of the pinion thereby to press the rear end surface of the pinion to the step of the pinion shaft so that the pinion is restricted from moving in an axially forward direction and an axially backward direction relative to the pinion shaft.

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7. (Amended) A starter comprising:

A6  
a starting motor for generating rotation force;

a pinion shaft rotatable by the starting motor and supported slidably in an axial direction, the pinion shaft having a recess on an outer periphery of a front end portion thereof and a step on the outer periphery thereof;

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Cont  
a pinion fitted on the pinion shaft in a rotation-restricted manner relative to the pinion shaft and movable forward integrally with the pinion shaft, wherein the pinion has a front end surface and a rear end surface, wherein the front end surface is further from the motor than the rear end surface and the rear end surface adjacently faces the step in the axial direction;

a restricting member fitted in the recess in front of the pinion in an axial direction to receive the front end surface of the pinion; and

a pressing member disposed between the pinion and the pinion shaft on a side of the rear end surface of the pinion for pressing the pinion toward the restricting member relative to the pinion shaft.

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10. (New) A pinion configuration for a starter comprising:

a rotatable pinion shaft slidably supported in an axial direction and having a first end and a second end, the second end having a step on an outer periphery thereof;

AM  
a pinion fitted on the second end of the pinion shaft in front of the step in the axial direction, wherein the pinion has a front end surface and a rear end surface, the rear end surface being opposite the front end surface and adjacently facing the step; and

a pressing member disposed between the pinion and the pinion shaft near the rear end surface of the pinion, wherein the pressing member normally presses the pinion in a direction away from the first end of the pinion shaft.

11. (New) The starter according to claim 10, further comprising a restricting member fitted on the second end of the pinion shaft in front of the pinion, wherein the front end surface of the pinion is in press-contact with the restricting member.

12. (New) The starter according to claim 10, wherein the pressing member includes a spring.

13. (New) The starter according to claim 10, further comprising a starting motor for generating a rotation force for rotating the pinion shaft, wherein the restricting member presses the pinion toward the motor.

14. (New) The starter according to claim 1, wherein the restricting member presses the pinion toward the motor.

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